blessed be He, says prayers. What does He pray? — R. Zutra b. Tobi said in the name of Rab: 'May it be My will that My mercy may suppress My anger, and that My mercy may prevail over My [other] attributes, so that I may deal with My children in the attribute of mercy and, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice'.[2] It was taught: R. Ishmael b. Elisha says: I once entered into the innermost part [of the Sanctuary] to offer incense and saw Akathriel Jah,[3] the Lord of Hosts, seated upon a high and exalted throne. He said to me: Ishmael, My son, bless Me! l replied: May it be Thy will that Thy mercy may suppress Thy anger and Thy mercy may prevail over Thy other attributes, so that Thou mayest deal with Thy children according to the attribute of mercy and mayest, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice! And He nodded to me with His head. Here we learn [incidentally] that the blessing of an ordinary man must not be considered lightly in your eyes.

R. Johanan further said in the name of R. Jose: How do you know that we must not try to placate a man in the time of his anger? For it is written: My face will go and I will give thee rest.[4] The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Wait till My countenance of wrath shall have passed away and then I shall give thee rest. But is anger then a mood of the Holy One, blessed be He? — Yes. For it has been taught:[5] A God that hath indignation every day.[6] And how long does this indignation last? One moment. And how long is one moment? One fifty-eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-eighth part of an hour. And no creature has ever been able to fix precisely this moment except the wicked Balaam, of whom it is written: He knoweth the knowledge of the Most High.[7] Now, he did not even know the mind of his animal; how then could he know the mind of the Most High? The meaning is, therefore, only that he knew how to fix precisely this moment in which the Holy One, blessed be He, is angry. And this is just what the prophet said to Israel: O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him . . . that ye may know the righteous acts of the Lord.[8] What means 'That ye may know the righteous acts of the Lord'? — R. Eleazar says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: See now, how many righteous acts I performed for you in not being angry in the days of the wicked Balaam. For had I been angry, not one remnant would have been left of the enemies of Israel.[9] And this too is the meaning of what Balaam said to Balak: How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I execrate, whom the Lord hath not execrated?[10] This teaches us that He was not angry all these days. And how long does His anger last? One moment. And how long is one moment? R. Abin (some say R. Abina) says: As long as it takes to say Rega'.[11] And how do you know that He is angry one moment? For it is said: For His anger is but for a moment [rega'], His favor is for a lifetime.[12] Or if you prefer you may infer it from the following verse: Hide thyself for a little moment until the indignation be overpast.[13] And when is He angry? — Abaye says: In [one moment of] those first three hours of the day, when the comb of the cock is white and it stands on one foot. Why, in each hour it stands thus [on one foot]?[14] — In each other hour it has red streaks, but in this moment it has no red streaks at all.

In the neighbourhood of R. Joshua b. Levi there was a Sadducee[15] who used to annoy him very much with [his interpretations of] texts. One day the Rabbi took a cock, placed it between the legs of his bed and watched it. He thought: When this moment arrives I shall curse him. When the moment arrived he was dozing [On waking up][16] he said: We learn from this that it is not proper to act in such a way. It is written: And His tender mercies are over all His works.[17] And it is further written: Neither is it good for the righteous to punish.[18] It was taught in the name of R. Meir: At the time when the sun rises and all the kings of the East and West put their crowns upon their heads and bow down to the sun, the Holy One, blessed be He, becomes at once angry.

R. Johanan further said in the name of R. Jose: Better is one self-reproach in the heart of a man than many stripes, for it is said: And she shall run after her lovers . . . then shall she say,[19] I shall go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.[20] R. Simon b. Lakish says: It is better than a hundred stripes, for it is said: A rebuke entereth deeper into a man of understanding